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EDITORS: HEARING AT 10 A.M. EST

FBI ARRESTS SPY NEAR NUCLEAR PLANT

AUGUSTA, GA. (UPI) -- FBI AGENTS SAY A HUNGARIAN-BORN MAN ARRESTED NEAR A NUCLEAR WEAPONS PLANT AND ARMY POST IS INVOLVED IN ONE OF THE BIGGEST SPY CASES IN U.S. HISTORY AND HAD LUGGAGE FILLED WITH "UNBELIEVABLE" ITEMS.

A HEARING WAS SCHEDULED TODAY FOR OTTO ATILLA GILBERT, 50. R.T. SMITH, HEAD OF AUGUSTA FBI OFFICE, SAID A NEWS CONFERENCE WOULD BE HELD ON THE STEPS OF THE FEDERAL COURTHOUSE AFTER THE HEARING. INFORMATION ALSO WOULD BE RELEASED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM FBI HEADQUARTERS IN WASHINGTON AND WOULD BE OF "NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE," OFFICIALS SAID.

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES REFUSED TO SAY WHETHER THE SPYING CHARGES INVOLVED FORT GORDON, AN ARMY POST IN AUGUSTA, OR THE SAVANNAH RIVER PLANT, WHICH PRODUCES WEAPONS-GRADE NUCLEAR MATERIAL IN A SPRAWLING FACILITY JUST ACROSS THE BORDER IN SOUTH CAROLINA.

THEY DID SAY, HOWEVER, THE CASE INVOLVES CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS IN AN "ESPIONAGE SCHEME AGAINST THE U.S. GOVERNMENT."

GILBERT WAS TAKEN INTO CUSTODY BY FBI AGENTS ON A STREET IN DOWNTOWN AUGUSTA SATURDAY ON FEDERAL ESPIONAGE CHARGES STEMMING FROM AN "ALLEGED EFFORT TO OBTAIN CLASSIFIED INFORMATION."

U.S. ATTORNEY HINTON R. PIERCE SAID THE ARREST WAS THE RESULT OF AN "EXTENSIVE AND PROLONGED INVESTIGATION" BY FEDERAL AUTHORITIES AND IS BELIEVED TO BE ONE OF THE BIGGEST SPY CASES IN U.S. HISTORY.

PIERCE SAID ITEMS FOUND IN GILBERT'S LUGGAGE ARE "UNBELIEVABLE," BUT HE REFUSED TO ELABORATE.

AT FORT GORDON, MAJ. JOE PAGE, THE BASE PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER, SAID THERE WAS NO INDICATION OF ESPIONAGE CONNECTED TO THE BASE. AT THE SAVANNAH RIVER PLANT, A DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE-OPERATED NUCLEAR WEAPONS FACILITY, JAMES GAYER, DIRECTOR OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, DENIED ANY KNOWLEDGE OF THE CASE.

RECORDS IN THE RICHMOND COUNTY JAIL, WHERE GILBERT WAS LODGED, LISTED GILBERT'S RESIDENCE AS EUROPE AND PIERCE SAID HIS MOST RECENT ADDRESS PROBABLY WAS IN HUNGARY, HIS BIRTHPLACE. HE SAID GILBERT MAY HAVE ONCE RESIDED IN THE UNITED STATES.

AUTHORITIES SAID THERE ARE SEVERAL DIFFERENT SPELLINGS OF THE SUSPECT'S LAST NAME AND HE MAY BE A NATURALIZED CITIZEN.

OFFICIALS SAID FEDERAL AGENTS AT THE HEARING WOULD FILE AFFIDAVITS AND SEARCH WARRANTS LISTING ITEMS FOUND IN GILBERT'S LUGGAGE AT THE AUGUSTA HILTON HOTEL.

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